

**For Immediate Release:** July 27, 2020

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## **FDACS Asking Floridians to Report Suspicious Seed Packets from China**

**Tallahassee, Fla.** – The **Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services** (FDACS) is warning Floridians about unsolicited packages of seeds [nytimes.com] received through the mail. The seed packets, which may arrive unexpectedly [insider.com] in packages bearing Chinese characters, may bear the name China Post, and may be labeled as jewelry, have been reported in multiple states including Virginia, Kansas, Washington, Oklahoma, Louisiana, Utah, and others.

As of July 27, FDACS has received at least 160 reports from Florida residents reporting having received suspicious seed packages. The content of the seed packages is unknown at this time.

The introduction of plant seeds into the United States is tightly regulated by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). Seeds of unknown origin may constitute agricultural smuggling, may be invasive, may introduce pathogens, toxins, or plant and animal diseases, may pose a risk of foodborne illness, and may pose a threat to plant, animal, and human health. FDACS is working closely to receive guidance from the USDA and its **Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service** (APHIS), the lead regulatory body on this issue, in consultation with U.S. Customs and Border Protection.

“Plant seeds from unknown sources may introduce dangerous pathogens, diseases, or invasive species into Florida, putting agriculture and our state’s plant, animal, and human health at risk,” said **Florida Agriculture Commissioner Nikki Fried**. “Anyone receiving these suspicious seed packets should not open them, should not plant them, should limit contact with them, and should report them immediately to both our department and USDA officials.”

**What To Do:** Anyone receiving unsolicited seed packages from other countries should follow these directions:

- **Do not open** the seed packet and avoid opening outer packaging or mailing materials, if possible
- **Do not plant** the seeds or discard them in trash that will be landfilled
- **Limit contact** with the seed package until further guidance on handling, disposal, or collection is available from the USDA
- Report the seed package to the **FDACS Division of Plant Industry** at 1-888-397-1517 or [DPIhelpline@FDACS.gov](mailto:DPIhelpline@FDACS.gov)
- Report the seed package to the **USDA APHIS Anti-Smuggling Hotline** [[aphis.usda.gov](mailto:aphis.usda.gov)] at 1-800-877-3835 or [SITC.Mail@aphis.usda.gov](mailto:SITC.Mail@aphis.usda.gov)

When reporting the seed package to FDACS and USDA/APHIS, please be prepared to provide one's name, physical address, phone number, and email address for contact purposes.

*Photo credit: Kentucky Department of Agriculture [kyagr.com]*

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Under Florida law, e-mail addresses are public records. If you do not want your e-mail address released in response to a public records request, do not send electronic mail to this entity. Instead, contact this office by phone or in writing.